

TREATMENT OF SCOTTISH HISTORY:ci

appears to allow them to Influence his judgement too much, and proceeds to suggest charges, against the founder of the house, \vhich rest on hypotheses rather than facts, and are the more difficult to meet because they are not directly made. In short the character is unfair.

The Master of Stair had been made Lord Advocate by James II, when Mackenzie refused to support that king's claim to the dispensing power, but held the post for only a year.¹ He was one of the Commissioners who on behalf of the Scottish Convention offered the crown to William II! and was reappointed Lord Advocate, May 25, 1689. In January 1691 he became the colleague of Melville as Secretary of State. Macaulay terms him. ' the prime minister

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for Scotland ', and this is a fair description of his position from 1691 to the summer of 1695. Sir John was the ablest debater in the Scottish Parliament: ' there was none in the parliament capable to take up the cudgels with him/* says Lockhart. Bold, able, clear-sighted, free from prejudices, either ecclesiastical or secular, and equally free from scruples^ he was a curious contrast to men such as Melville, Crawford, and Hamilton. But the massacre of Glencoe has permanently stained his fame, and his national services have been forgotten.

Macaulay's account of the Glencoe episode has led to more controversy than almost any other

passage in the History, because it affects the character of the King as well as that of his minister. Paget, Mackay, Lang, and many other writers have minutely examined the evidence on which Macaulay's story is based. This is not a case in

¹ From Jan. 21, 1687, to Jan. 19, 1688. Macaulay says (IV. 1571) "odii" •- be had been an accomplice in some of the misdeeds lie arraigned alter the Revolution. But Sir John had been himself fined and imprisoned by the government of Charles II, and during the period when he was Lord Advocate persecutions had almost ceased.